

PRIORITY

~~SECRET~~
(Security Classification)

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

1463

104-21-NIS/2-857

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy, San José

DESP. NO.

COPY NO. 8 SERIES B

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

February 8, 1957

REF : Department's A-73, February 1, 1957

For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	REC'D	IN F O
	061 2/15	RMIR ARA IE REP

SUBJECT: Information Required for NIE 80-57.

MR JACKSON

Brendy
R. Bm
KA

The following constitutes the Embassy's considered estimate as of the moment regarding the answers to the specific questions raised in the reference instruction. It must be borne in mind, however, that, particularly with regard to the many questions which can only be dealt with speculatively, the Costa Rican political situation is so variable that there can be no assurance that some new factor will not enter the picture at any moment in such a way as to change things completely. Since the receipt of the Department's instruction coincided with completion of a round-up on the political situation which contains the answers to a number of these questions, the pertinent despatches should be consulted in conjunction with the following comments (see despatches No. 428 and No. 430 of February 5, 1957):

1) It is doubtful that either President FIGUERES' visit to Europe or recent harsh criticisms by opposition leaders has caused him to lose any significant popular support, although the Costa Ricans who read the newspapers undoubtedly got considerable satisfaction out of the Legislature's near repudiation of permission for him to make the trip. This adverse impression was certainly counteracted by a tendency to sympathize with his plight, as well as by favorable reaction to the news which was sent back during the trip regarding the various projects for the economic improvement of Costa Rica which he was said to be discussing. In general, it is believed that the antipathy to Figueres and the Figueristas was so clearly delineated before that neither his trip nor whatever further fuel the opposition has been able to add in recent months would have any serious effect on the line-up. Actually, Figueres' more statesmanlike utterances in the immediate past regarding the opposition convention and relations with Nicaragua have probably gained him some support.

There is nothing to indicate that Figueres has moderated his position or activities as a champion of democracy in this area or in Latin America as a whole.

It is determined that CIA has no objection to declass

- ☐ It contains information of CIA interest that must remain classified at TS S O
Authority: HR 70-2
☐ It contains nothing of CIA interest

EA Jamison:agb
REPORTER~~SECRET~~

INFORMATION COPY

Page 111 of 111
 Desp. No. San José
 From San José

SECRET

(Classification)

Page 111 of 111
 Encl. No.
 Desp. No.
 From

versation with the Chargé he made it quite clear that he feels that he, rather than Romulo BETANCOURT, has taken the lead in recommending moderation of the attitude toward the "dictators" from one of violence and subversion to one in which increased faith is placed in the evolutionary democratic process. This is also borne out by his statements this week in which he speaks of the advice and counsel which he has been giving to his friends among the Nicaraguan exiles, to the effect that they should give Luis SOMOZA a chance to prove that he desires to govern Nicaragua democratically. While Figueres may well moderate his strategy and tactics, it would be unrealistic to assume that he will renounce his assumed role of a leader of Latin American democratic forces.

There are elements of the Costa Rican opposition, both in exile and in Costa Rica, who would attempt to oust Figueres at whatever time and by whatever means this might seem practicable. The feeling on the part of these people will not, in our opinion, be changed by anything which Figueres might do, short of resigning and leaving the country. The probability that they would gain support from Nicaragua has undoubtedly lessened with the recent reduction in tension between the two countries, highlighted by friendly words spoken on both sides this week. The other governments which might like to support a counter-Figueres revolution--Venezuela and the Dominican Republic--will not be affected in their thinking by any moderating change in his attitude.

2) The answer to this question is given in detail in the Embassy's despatch No. 428, referred to above. In general, the split in PLN is serious and seems to be getting more so.

There is no doubt that, despite the defection of ROSSI, the PLN under ORLICH has the leadership and organization necessary to wage an effective electoral campaign. This is amply demonstrated by the machine-like precision of the proceedings and the number of supporters Orlich brought together at the party convention on January 13.

3) Embassy comment on this question is also given in the despatch referred to above. Although the Independent Party has youthful leadership and is beginning to develop an organization, it is still too early to determine whether this group can gain wide popular following in the face of the political machine which Orlich has developed, and which is so essential to the waging of any political campaign. This does not underestimate the support of the influential and respected members of the party already given to Rossi, but it does mean that, in our view, it takes more than enthusiasm and isolated sup-

SECRET

Page 441 of 3
 Desp. No. San José
 From _____

Secret

(Classification)

Pa 7 of _____
 Encl. No. _____
 Desp. No. _____
 From _____

port of individuals to carry on an effective political campaign. VOLIO Jiménez, the Foreign Minister's son, and FERNANDEZ Durán, former Ambassador to Colombia, appear to be the principal campaign managers for Rossi, but it is doubtful that either of them has had the political experience which may be required. So far, at least, the Rossistas seem to have substantial financial backing, although the lengthy campaign will undoubtedly drain a number of pocketbooks.

It is obvious that the candidate from whom Rossi must count on drawing most of his votes is Orlich, since he is the bearer of the NLP banner. However, because he is personable and youthful, Rossi may attract some members of the opposition who dislike ECHANDI.

Obviously, Rossi could "consider" throwing his support to Orlich at any time. The present trend of newspaper vituperation, however, is definitely in the direction of deepening the division of the party to the place where forthright support to Orlich might be out of the question. The real test would come if Rossi ran as third man in an election in which the three principal candidates came out so evenly-divided that a second election would have to be held. In this circumstance, or in any other in which Rossi would have to make a clear-cut choice, it seems much more likely that he would "free" his supporters without a personal directive, recognizing that most of them would turn to Orlich as the person who, in spite of intra-party differences, would carry on the party program of the NLP. In the long run, this program may win out over personalities, since Figueres always speaks of it in terms of one which will last from ten- to twenty years.

4) This question is largely answered in the despatch referred to above. In general, there is no doubt that the MDO under Echandi has what it takes to wage an aggressive campaign. They are, in fact, waging one right now.

It is too early to determine the solidarity of the MDO components despite public proclamations of unity by the three defeated pre-candidates. Anything can happen between candidates who were so bitter before the convention, especially, of course, between OREAMUNO and Echandi.

It is a truism of Costa Rican politics that either of the main parties will seek or accept support from any possible source, except, perhaps, from the Communists, and this primarily because such support is almost certain to be disadvantageous in the long-run. It is clear from the lack of emphasis on program and from the degree to which personalities figure in

SECRET

Page 441 of 441
 Desp. No. San José
 From _____

SECRET

(Classification)

Encl. No. _____
 Desp. No. _____
 From _____

the campaign that the principal objective is to win the election by almost any means available.

5) As indicated in despatch No. 430, the PVP has, as yet, taken no position on the 1958 elections and such overtures as may have been made appear to have come from the NLP side. It seems likely that the votes which the PVP controls will be bargained for, but that the PVP price will be agreement to authorize public registration of the party. It is doubtful that any of the groups is prepared to pay this price at this time.

6) This question is largely covered in despatch No. 428. It is doubtful that Frank MARSHALL would be considered seriously as a candidate, but his capability as a trouble-maker remains intact. It seems doubtful that he would take violent steps unless there should be an obvious manipulation of the electoral process. His erratic capabilities are demonstrated, however, by his pre-convention proclamations for constitutionality and the democratic processes in one week and his proposal for a union of all candidates, thus eliminating the democratic processes, at another time.

7) Although it is believed that Figueres has convinced himself that he is a genuine democrat, supporting constitutional processes, there is no doubt that these convictions would be sorely tested if it became clear that the opposition were about to gain the upper hand definitively. In these circumstances it is our view that he would try to find almost any other means to prevent an opposition triumph than "rigging or postponing the elections," since it was his opposition to that type of maneuver which caused him to take the lead in the Liberation revolution of 1948. It seems much more likely that, of the two alternatives posed, which seem to be the most likely ones, he would "discover" a well-organized opposition plot to take over the Government by force. In this case, the plot "discovered" would be much more likely to be internal than external, since any external support would have to be proved by OAS machinery of the kind which accomplished this both in December, 1948, and January, 1955. The real question which it is impossible to answer, since no one has direct access to his thinking processes, is whether Figueres' stake in Costa Rica, physical and ideological, is sufficient to cause him to sacrifice his ambition to assume ever-increasing stature as a leader of democratic change in Latin America, and possibly even to act as a contributor to the moderation of East-West tensions. If the latter ambition has predominance, he might well accept electoral defeat of his

SECRET

Page 441 of 441

Desp. No. 1.1

From San José

SECRET

(Classification)

1 of 1

Encl. No. 1

Desp. No. 1

From 1

party, and even opposition control by other means, in order to appear before the world as one completely faithful to his principles.

Edward A. Jamison

Edward A. Jamison
Chargé d'Affaires a. i.

SECRET